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- Ruth hails official opening of Queensferry Crossing

4 Sep 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has welcomed the official opening of the Queensferry Crossing.

Earlier, the Queen cut the ribbon on the new bridge across the Forth, exactly 53 years after she opened the Forth Road Bridge.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“As a Fifer who lives in Edinburgh, and someone who represents thousands of bridge users, I know just how important it is to have speedy access across the Forth.

“The Queensferry Crossing is a fantastic piece of engineering and I pay tribute to all those involved in her design and construction.

“To have Her Majesty the Queen opening the crossing, more than 50 years after she opened the Forth Road Bridge, made today extra special.

“To see three bridges, from three different centuries and made to three different designs all standing tall and side by side across the Forth, is a beautiful sight.”

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4 Sep 2017



The SNP is still playing catch up on the 2016 Programme for Government, days before it is set to announce another one for the year ahead.

Analysis by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed less than a quarter of the bills proposed this time last year have been passed.

Nicola Sturgeon said in the 2016 programme that she wanted to pass bills on vital issues like domestic abuse, child poverty, housing and social security.

However, just three were passed before Holyrood stopped for recess in June – bills on air passenger duty, railway policing and childhood abuse.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has urged the SNP to use the opportunity of the coming year to make use of the Scottish Parliament's powers.

Last week, Ruth outlined her plan to resolve Scotland's housing crisis, with a new generation of new towns.

In the coming weeks, the party will also set out ideas on the NHS and on economic growth.

It will also back calls for an Education Bill, Frank's Law – to allow under 65s with conditions like dementia to receive free personal care – and moves to introduce whole life sentencing.

Bills on local government funding, business rates and planning should also be considered in the year ahead, she added.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"People in Scotland have given all political parties a very clear message – to get back to the day job and focus on the things that really matter.

"As Holyrood returns to business this week, we are focused on exactly that.

"It's time to dump the endless debate about independence, and put the focus back on the forgotten issues.

"Scotland cannot afford a repeat of last year's Programme for Government, when the SNP set out a range of ideas, but delivered on hardly any.

"Even without the upcoming programme, ministers would still be playing catch up on last year.

"We need to build more homes, recruit more teachers and get our economy back in the fast lane.

"A Scottish Conservative government would be focusing on these priorities in a programme for government this week, and we urge the SNP to follow suit.

"The constitution is now in the past. The future is about providing a better deal for Scotland as we move forward."

Bills promised in the 2016 Programme for Government:

- Air Passenger Duty Bill
- Child Poverty Bill
- Contract (Third Party Rights) Bill
- Domestic Abuse Bill
- Expenses and Funding of Civil Litigation Bill
- Forestry Bill
- Gender Balance on Public Boards Bill
- Islands Bill
- Housing (Amendment) Bill
- Limitation (Childhood Abuse) Bill
- Railway Policing Bill
- Social Security Bill
- Wild Animals in Circuses Bill

Three Bills were passed:

Air Departure Tax Bill, Railway Policing Bill, Limitation (Childhood Abuse) Bill

[Record numbers hospitalised after overdosing on heroin and methadone](#)

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1 Sep 2017



A record number of people were admitted to hospital last year after overdosing on opioids, it has been revealed.

More than 2500 people were hospitalised in 2016, the highest number since 1999 when these particular records began.

It means nearly 50 people a week are rushed to hospital after taking opioid drugs, which are defined as heroin, methadone or opium.

The statistics emerged following a Parliamentary Question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

They follow on from figures last month revealing record drug deaths for opioids, with 776 people losing their life in 2016.

Of the 2507 last year who were admitted after an overdose, 24 died in hospital as a result.

The Scottish Conservatives said these are the latest statistics which show the need for a new drugs strategy north of the border.

The party have repeatedly urged the Scottish Government to get tougher on dealers and suppliers who ruin lives and communities, and find alternatives to methadone for those addicts who want to give up drugs completely.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“This is the latest set of figures which show the severity of Scotland’s drug problem, which is now the worst in Europe.

“The sheer scale of heroin and methadone use is ruining lives left, right and centre.

“We already knew Scotland was experiencing a drugs deaths rate higher than anywhere else.

“Now we can see the extent of those overdosing on dangerous substances too.

“We need a new strategy urgently to help these vulnerable people beat this lethal habit for good.

“The only crumb of comfort from these statistics is how relatively few deaths occur directly from these overdoses, and we have to thank our hardworking NHS staff for that.”

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29 Aug 2017



Shadow education secretary Liz Smith has demanded answers from her SNP counterpart after a report by public spending watchdogs was watered down by the Scottish Government.

It was reported today that civil servants demanded changes were made to an Audit Scotland paper on colleges.

As a result, reference to a 41 per cent drop in students was removed and replaced with more favourable narrative.

Now the Mid Scotland and Fife MSP has written to education secretary John Swinney to ask why the interference took place.

She said ministers were only allowed to make corrections when factual inaccuracies appeared in draft Audit Scotland documents.

But in this case, the “undue pressure” from the SNP government was clearly intended to “tone down” language which would have appeared critical of ministers’ performance.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“Civil servants and ministers are in a position to ask Audit Scotland to make corrections to a report if it is clear there are factual inaccuracies or errors.

“However, in the recent case of Audit Scotland’s review of colleges, documents reveal that undue pressure was brought to bear by a civil servant to alter the wording and the tone of the report.

“This is quite a separate matter.

“In the last session of the Scottish Parliament there was a great deal of debate about probity in government and the transparency of information which is provided in the public interest.

“In this instance, the pressure that was applied by a civil servant to tone down the scale of concern about the college sector was unacceptable and harmful to the image of government in Scotland.”

[Patients ‘failed’ as SNP miss health targets across the board](#)

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- Patients ‘failed’ as SNP miss health targets across the board

29 Aug 2017



Patients across Scotland are being “failed” by an SNP government which is continuing to miss a series of health targets, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Figures released today revealed people are still waiting too long for a range of treatments, and that a legal guarantee brought in by the nationalists is regularly breached.

The ISD statistics show that in June, just 84.8 per cent of patients were seen to within 18 weeks of referral, well below the target of 90 per cent.

That particular goal hasn’t been met since 2014, and means nearly 16,000 people waited too long for treatment to begin in June.

In addition, in the same month, nearly one in five patients awaiting a key diagnostic case were being forced to wait six weeks or more – the equivalent of 13,500 people. In some health boards, more than a third missed that target.

And for outpatients, more than a quarter had to wait longer than 12 weeks for an appointment, the worst performance in seven years.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It’s becoming increasingly difficult to find an NHS target the SNP does consistently hit.

“Its stewardship of the health service has been nothing short of a disgrace, and patients right across the country are suffering as a result.

“This shameful performance from the nationalists means tens of thousands of patients every month receive a lower standard of care than they’re entitled to.

“Month after month the SNP government is criticised for these statistics, yet nothing ever seems to get better.

“The SNP isn’t just failing to hit its own targets, it’s failing vulnerable people in every part of Scotland.”

To see the full ISD Scotland report on waiting times, visit:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-08-29/2017-08-29-WT-18WksRTT-Report.pdf>

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-08-29/2017-08-29-WT-Diagnostic-Report.pdf>

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-08-29/2017-08-29-WT-IPDCOP-Report.pdf>